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INFORMATION

CANADIAN CENTRE FOR
OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY



Canada
Dept of Labour

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March 20, 1978

OTTAWA....Labour Minister John Munro today introduced into Parliament a Bill to establish a Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety. Mr. Munro said upon introduction that "in Canada we need new and effective methods of reducing or eliminating health and safety hazards at the work-place. The proposed Centre will help meet this requirement."

The bill is endorsed by the Honourable Monique Bégin, Minister of National Health and Welfare. Its objective has been the subject of intensive consultation with provincial authorities, labour and management groups, specialists in the safety field and other interested parties and in principle has won wide support.

The Centre will be a self-governing body whose purpose is to promote the fundamental right of all Canadians to a healthy, safe working environment. Among its main functions will be the establishment of an integrated information system on all aspects of occupational health and safety, dissemination of authoritative information and the stimulation of research in this vital area.

Cost of operating the Centre the first year will be \$1 million, subsequently increasing to about \$8-9 million a year. The latter figure represents one percent of the \$800 million dollars now being paid out each year by

workmen's compensation boards in Canada as a result of injuries and illnesses on the job.

The Centre will initially be financed by the federal government but with provision for support in the future by provincial governments, labour, business and other groups.

The OHS Centre will facilitate consultation and collaboration among all public authorities, both federal and provincial. It will have no regulatory powers but will serve all interests and cooperate with all existing jurisdictions.

As Mr. Munro points out, "Existing legislation in Canada relating to the work environment is massive and complex. There are 220 provincial and federal laws and 400 sets of regulations administered by 90 different departments and agencies. Yet each year the number of Canadians injured or made ill as a direct result of their work increases - over one million in 1976, and the cost to the economy grows - over \$800 million in known, direct costs. Obviously regulation alone is not a sufficient answer."

To ensure the Centre remains both independent and non-biased, its governing Council will be multi-

partite. It will have representatives nominated by the lieutenant-governors in council of each province, the governments of the two territories, the federal government, labour and management, and the professional scientific and academic communities.

The proposed legislation empowers the Centre to publish information openly, and requires it to both hear, and account for its action or reaction to, briefs and representations from interested groups and individuals. Support for the concept of the Centre has been expressed by provincial governments, labour, business and the professional, academic and medical communities.

"The Centre, with its characteristics of independence and openness, creates the atmosphere required for real, co-equal partnership amongst all the groups it represents, including the provincial and federal governments," Mr. Munro said.

The staff of the Centre will include professionals in engineering, science and medicine as well as in information systems. The aim is that additional talent will be drawn upon to carry out specific projects, without becoming permanent staff members. Existing research facilities will be used and an inventory of all research projects will be maintained to avoid

duplication. The Centre would produce criteria documents from which acceptable standards can be developed by each of the jurisdictions throughout Canada.

The Centre will also promote, in cooperation with existing educational institutions, the development of expertise in occupational health and safety in Canada.

"There is a dearth of professionals in this field in Canada," said Mr. Munro. "We must put more emphasis on and effort into the development of Canadian expertise. At the moment we depend heavily on importing these skills from other countries."

"The Centre will make factual information, separated from value judgements, available to the Canadian community. When individuals have a better understanding of the risks they may face at work they will be better able to participate in the resolution of such problems," Mr. Munro said.

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